

UMKC Study Abroad Handbook



2024 University of Missouri - Kansas City

Table of Contents

- Introduction.....3
- Contact Information
- Passport...4
 - Applying for a visa
- Health Insurance
 - GeoBlue
 - Health and safety website resources
- Pre-Departure healthcare
 - Vaccinations
 - Ongoing health issues
 - Prescription medications
- Financial Aid
- Money Liquidity While Abroad
 - Notifying your bank
 - Ordering Currency
 - Opening a bank account abroad
 - ATMs
 - Credit cards
 - Lost or stolen bank cards
- Travel Preparation
 - International flight arrangements
 - Register your travel with the department of state
 - Packing
 - Voting while abroad
- Safety
 - Laws and legal procedures abroad
 - Arrest abroad
 - U.S Embassy and Consulate Services
 - Emergency Contacts
 - UMKC International Travel Policy
- Health Abroad
 - Mental health
 - Sexual health
 - Alcohol and drugs
 - Water and food precautions
 - Tattoos and piercings
 - Over the counter medicine and first aid
- Communication
 - In-country Communication
- Culture Shock
 - Cultural difference
 - Personal space
 - Food
 - Appropriate topics of conversation
- Other Resources
 - Government Websites
 - Culture and Travel Websites

Introduction

This guidebook contains recommendations and directions for students to have a fulfilling and successful study abroad experience. The contents of this guidebook will help students prepare for their international trip and gives guidance on best practices while abroad. While comprehensive, this guidebook is not exhaustive. You should be seeking information from a variety of resources. Countries have different laws, regulations, cultures, and norms. If you need information that isn't included here, please contact your study abroad program coordinator or advisor before you leave for your program.

As a regular part of safety preparedness, please always carry the phone numbers and e-mail addresses (if applicable) for the following contacts:

- UMKC's Study Abroad & Global Engagement (816-235-5790). Regular office hours are 8:00 AM-12:00 PM and 1:00 PM-5:00 PM, Monday-Friday.
- the UMKC Police Department (816-235-1515) who will contact a member of the UMKC Study Abroad Team at home in the event of an emergency occurring outside of regular office hours
- The Program Resident or Faculty Director, as applicable
- The International Programs Office of the host institution
- Emergency phone numbers for the host institution
- The US Embassy and/or local Consulate in any country you are studying or traveling
- Family at home and work

Introduction

AlertTraveler

- To enhance the health, safety, and security of students, UMKC offers the AlertTraveler security software to all individuals participating in study abroad and university-sponsored international travel. This includes faculty and staff accompanying them. AlertTraveler delivers detailed country and city intelligence, along with real-time security alerts, sourced from WorldAware, a leading global security information provider.
 - Receive real-time alerts based on your location and travel itinerary about events that may affect your overall wellbeing, and travel plans. Alerts are classified as informational, warning, or critical, depending on the severity of the situation.
 - Instant check-in feature lets you confirm your safety after a major event, such as a natural disaster. A prompt response is required for any check-in requests you receive.
 - One-touch dialing connects you to local emergency services, U.S. embassies/consulates, and the UMKC 24/7 emergency line with the UMKC Police Department. AlertTraveler also lets you connect directly to UMKC's Study Abroad department.
 - Access country and city intelligence on political and security conditions, helping you make well-informed decisions during your time abroad.
 - Find additional useful details, such as cultural insights, health advisories, travel logistics, weather conditions, communication tools, transportation options, and financial tips, including currency, ATMs, credit cards, and tipping practices.

Preparing For Your Trip Abroad

Apply for a Passport

- The first thing you will need before going abroad is a passport. If you have not applied for one yet, you should do so immediately. Passports can take up to eight weeks to be delivered to you. If you have your passport currently, it generally needs to be valid for at least six months beyond your program end date. For more information on applying for a passport, please visit this link:
(<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports.html>)

Visa Information

- A visa is an official authorization from a country's government that allows you to enter that country. To find out if you need a visa for your study abroad program, consult your adviser or visit travel.state.gov. For detailed information, check the website of the consulate or embassy of your host country. Since obtaining a visa can take several weeks, it's important to start the application process early. Additionally, if you plan to travel to other countries while abroad, make sure to review their entry requirements, as some may require a visa regardless of your visit's purpose or duration.

Preparing For Your Trip Abroad

Geoblue Health Insurance

- Geoblue is the international health insurance provider for UMKC. This policy offers extensive coverage for sickness, accidents, and emergency travel medical needs, including medical evacuation and repatriation of remains—services typically not covered by domestic insurance. GeoBlue has set up a global network of doctors who will provide care and handle claims directly, so you won't need to pay out-of-pocket during treatment. Before you leave for your study abroad program, GeoBlue can also help students arrange for treatment of any ongoing medical conditions, including doctor visits and prescription refills. You are expected to enroll yourself in a plan that covers you for the whole time you are abroad. Even if the program you are attending provides insurance, you are still required to enroll in a Geoblue international health insurance plan. For more information, please navigate to this link:
(<https://ogse.geobluestudents.com/?ac=BJA-2348>)
- For more international health information, you can go to the UMKC health information section of our website:
(<https://www.umkc.edu/study-abroad/application-process/health-and-safety.html>)

Pre-Departure Healthcare

- Before you leave, it's important to consult your health care providers travel division and let them know you plan on traveling overseas for an extended period. Compile a complete medical record that includes details on your current medications, any chronic conditions, allergies, immunization history, blood type, your primary healthcare provider's contact information, and a copy of your health insurance policy. Keep these records in a safe place, carry a copy with you, and email a backup copy to yourself. If you have medications you take frequently, make sure you bring enough for the entire period you are abroad. If that's not possible, GeoBlue can assist in filling prescriptions abroad.

Vaccinations

- Ensure that all your routine immunizations are current before traveling. Find your childhood and adult immunization records and bring them to your pre-travel physical exam. You can schedule an appointment at the UMKC Student Health Center to have your immunization records reviewed and to receive any necessary vaccinations. During this visit, the healthcare provider will also discuss additional vaccinations, medications, and precautions relevant to your travel destination, such as those for traveler's diarrhea, malaria, food and water safety, insect protection, and will review your personal medical history.

Ongoing Health Issues

- If you have a chronic health condition, it's important to coordinate with your U.S.-based healthcare providers to arrange for medication and continued treatment while abroad. Creating a health management plan before you leave will help ensure a smooth transition of care from the U.S. to your study abroad location.

Financial Aid

- Financial aid is available to students studying abroad. When applying for a specific program, you will be asked to complete an estimate of the costs for the program. This form is submitted to the UMKC Office of Financial Aid for use in determining your need for aid while abroad. Completing all forms before the deadline is critical for ensuring you get the right amount of aid for your time abroad.

Scholarships

- Scholarships are also available for study abroad programs. Students should only take what they need so others may receive aid that could make the difference between them attending a program or not. Scholarships are available for students who are less economically privileged than others. For more scholarship information, please visit UMKC's Study Abroad website here: umkc-sa.terradotta.com

Managing Money While Overseas

Notify Your Bank

- Before you leave for your program, it is very important that you notify your bank of the dates you will be abroad. Failure to do so can lead to your financial institution to lock your account to protect you from what they see as fraudulent charges overseas.

Creating a Budget

- Create a budget for yourself before you depart. Figuring out how much money you will need for emergencies or other things you will do outside of your program is important for ensuring you get the most out of your time abroad. Determine the ways you might spend money outside of your program and plan around that. You can research the cost of food and other activities by using the internet to check pricing and exchange rates in your host country.

Ordering Currency

- It's also a good idea to order currency from your bank before you leave for your program. Alternatively, you can get currency from international airports, banks, or train stations while abroad. Avoid exchanging currency at restaurants, shopping centers, and hotels since rates are usually higher at these places.
- If you are staying abroad for more than a semester it might make sense to open a bank account in your host country. Talk to your study abroad advisor for more information.

ATM/Debit Cards

- Many students find that using a debit or ATM card to withdraw money while abroad is the most convenient way to access their funds. Whether you use a dedicated ATM card or a debit card, you can withdraw local currency from ATMs in your host country, even though your account holds U.S. dollars. It's a good idea to track your funds by converting your dollars into the foreign currency in a separate bank book or spreadsheet, monitoring all withdrawals and purchases in that currency. This will help you estimate your remaining balance, with exact figures available when you check your bank statement or view it online.
- Remember that not all merchants abroad accept every type of debit card. Students tend to have the best luck using Visa, MasterCard, or American Express. Additionally, some vendors, especially small shops and markets, may not accept debit or credit cards at all. If you plan to purchase gifts or souvenirs from these places, it's wise to carry some cash with you.

Managing Money While Overseas

Credit Cards

- Credit cards can simplify international transactions and are essential in case of a financial emergency. It's a good idea to bring one with you but be cautious with spending to avoid running up high costs from service fees and interest. Losing or having your card stolen can also cause complications, particularly when traveling. Before you go, confirm that your card is accepted in your destination and understand how it will work abroad to help you plan effectively.

Lost or Stolen Bank Cards

- Make sure to write down your card numbers and the 24/7 contact numbers for any cards you're bringing abroad and keep this information in a secure place. Keep in mind that toll-free numbers usually don't work outside the U.S. Having this information handy will allow you to quickly contact your bank or credit card company to deactivate your card if it's lost or stolen. You might also want to share these details with a trusted family member or friend back home, in case they need to help you in an emergency.

Travel Preparation

International Flight Arrangements

- If this is your first time flying, you should check [tsa.gov](https://www.tsa.gov) for current baggage guidelines. Check your individual airline's website for more specific baggage information and fees since rules and costs can change between airlines. **It is also very important that you arrive two to three hours in advance of your flight.** Getting through check-in, TSA, and finding your gate can take more time than you think. Some airlines offer online check in that enables you to drop your bag off at a service kiosk. This cuts down the time you spend waiting in line. Check your specific airports recommendations.

Making Flight Arrangements

- You are responsible for making flight arrangements to your destination and back to the United States. You should schedule your flight to arrive in the early morning or afternoon in your host country. Keep in mind time zone differences when booking flights. Be sure to book well ahead of your departure date and check multiple sites for the best prices.

Registering Travel With The U.S. Department of State

- As a US citizen, you should take advantage of the U.S. Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program. This program makes it possible for those back home to contact you in case of an emergency. If you are taking a trip either during or after your programs ends, you should register that as well.

Packing

- Packing for a study abroad journey is more important than you think it is. Depending on your host country, standards of dress can be dramatically different than here in the United States. Do research on appropriate dress in your host country. Also keep in mind what weather you will be experiencing. As an example, if your host country is in the middle of its rainy season, it might be a good idea to bring shoes that won't be ruined by water.
- Packing light is a good way to have extra room to bring back things you have collected. You will also have to carry your luggage through airports and possibly public transit.

Travel Preparation

Packing Cont.

- You need to make sure you attach a luggage tag to each bag you bring. Luggage tags give people a way to contact you in case you lose your baggage. You should also include your contact information inside of your bag if your luggage tag is lost.

Voting While Abroad

- Using an absentee ballot you may vote while abroad. You must complete and send a federal post card to your local election office prior to traveling. Please see this website for more information:
(<https://travel.state.gov/content/dam/students-abroad/pdfs/voting.pdf>)

Safety

Laws and Legal Procedures While Abroad

- While in another country you are subject to its laws and other legal procedures. Your legal rights and protections in the US do not apply to other countries. US embassies and consulates are limited in what they can provide to you in the event you are arrested. Take time to familiarize yourself with the laws in your host country.

Arrest or Detention While Abroad

- Most countries where UMKC students study are signatories of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (VCCR). This treaty grants U.S. citizens arrested or detained abroad the right to promptly contact a consular officer from the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. Over 170 nations are participants in the VCCR. While the 20 countries not part of the convention may not follow this protocol, many of them have alternative bilateral agreements with the U.S. regarding consular access
- If you are arrested while abroad, here are some things to keep in mind
 - You should not make any statements without a lawyer present. You should contact your local US embassy or consulate as soon as humanly possible. The detention of a US citizen is considered an emergency. They will send a consular officer usually within 24 hours.
 - US embassies and consulates keep a list of local lawyers. The local US institution does not verify the quality of these lawyers since they are asked to be included on the list.

U.S. Embassy and Consulate Services

- If you face significant legal, political, health, or financial difficulties, the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate can offer some limited help. They can provide a list of local lawyers or doctors, inform your next of kin in case of an emergency or serious illness, reach out to friends or family on your behalf to request support, assist during civil unrest or natural disasters, and help replace a lost or stolen passport. While they serve as a key resource for finding advice, they are unable to offer advice directly themselves.

UMKC International Travel Policy

- You can view UMKC's International Travel Policy here on our website: (<https://www.umkc.edu/study-abroad/application-process/international-travel-policy.html>)

Health Abroad

Mental Health Abroad

- Initial culture shock can have a major impact on your mental health at the start of your study abroad journey. Trying to adjust to a new language and culture can be exhausting and time consuming. Understand the symptoms so you can find help from a professional if needed. Symptoms can include:
 - Participating in dangerous activities
 - Noticeable shifts in personality such as becoming unusually aggressive or withdrawn
 - Missed assignments
 - Frequent absences from school
 - Changes in sleep patterns, neglect of personal hygiene
 - Overwhelming tiredness
 - Persistent sadness, expressions of hopelessness
 - Preoccupation with despair or death
 - Giving away valued belongings.

Sexual Health Abroad

- While sexual encounters may not always be planned, practicing safe sex should be, and it's important to be prepared. Even if you don't anticipate being intimate while abroad, it's wise to bring reliable protection, as options available in the U.S. may be safer and more dependable than those found elsewhere. Don't worry about being judged for carrying condoms or other protective measures, and don't assume your partner will always have protection. Safe sex is essential.
- Additionally, remember that HIV and several STDs, like herpes and genital warts, can be transmitted through oral sex. Using a dental dam can greatly lower the risk of exposure to sexually transmitted infections.

Health Abroad

Alcohol and Drug Usage Abroad

- Norms on alcohol and drugs can vary widely from nation to nation. Excessive drinking can be seen as a way to build relationships between people. Keep in mind that you are a representative of the University and of the United States. Students are still subject to the student code of conduct while abroad. If you are arrested for committing a crime while under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs there is little the University or a US consulate or embassy can do for you.

Water and Food

- In some countries the tap water is not safe to drink. View the food and water safety guidelines for your program of choice. If the tap water is safe to drink, the mineral content might upset your system if consumed. Do not panic if your body reacts to the local food or water. It may just be that your body is adjusting. If symptoms become severe, seek medical attention immediately.

Tattoos and Piercings

- Before getting a tattoo or piercing abroad, it's important to think about the health risks associated with any procedure that involves breaking the skin with a needle. The biggest concern is the transmission of blood-borne diseases. If the equipment used is contaminated with the blood of someone infected, you could contract serious illnesses like hepatitis C, hepatitis B, tetanus, tuberculosis, or HIV.

Communication

In Country Communication

- Having a working communications device is an important part of any study abroad journey. If you are planning to take your cellphone abroad, contact your provider to see what options are out there for keeping your service activated overseas. Alternatively, if you can unlock your phone you may use a domestic sim-card instead. This option is usually much cheaper than using a US service providers international plan. In some cases, you use a combination of local wireless networks and messaging apps to get by if purchasing a local sim card or using your US cellular providers international options isn't an option available to you.
- Local sim-cards can usually be bought at most international airports. You can purchase them from a vendor directly or from a vending machine (these are somewhat rare). Vendors will assist in the setting up of your new domestic sim-card.

Culture Shock

Cultural Difference

- Countries all over the world have their own unique local culture and community. These differences are something you need to consider to enjoy your time abroad. To adapt to the host culture you will need to be flexible and open minded, understand that your sense of humor may not translate over to your new host culture, and try to be friendly and outgoing with locals. Making friends is the easiest way to get perspectives you otherwise would not consider

Personal Space

- Different cultures consider different distances when we talk about personal space. Try not to be easily offended when someone invades your personal space. You should research what is considered personal space in your host country. You should be prepared to be up close and personal with other people in public transportation as an example.

Food

- Cultural norms also apply to food and eating out. You may come across food combinations that you find bizarre or just plain wrong. Try to experiment and expand your pallet despite this. Tips and taxes may also be included in the price of items on the menu. Near and inside of transportation stations food may be more expensive. Try going down a few side streets to experience something special and a little less expensive.

Appropriate Topics of Conversation

- Each culture has topics of conversation that are considered taboo. These subjects may not make sense to you as to why they are a cultural no-go zone for locals. Political discussions can easily become a flash point in conversation. If you aren't sure where you stand on an issue or are simply uncomfortable discussing it, don't be afraid to back out of a conversation.

Resources

Government Websites

- Department of State Travel Information: studentsabroad.state.gov
- Department of State Travel Registration: step.state.gov
- Passport Services and Information: travel.state.gov
- Foreign Embassies in the U.S: usembassy.gov
- Foreign Entry Requirements: travel.state.gov
- Department of State Travel Warnings: travel.state.gov
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: cdc.gov
- Overseas Security Advisory Council: osac.gov

Travel Websites

- Exchange Rate Information: xe.com
- Electrical Outlets Abroad: www.iec.ch
- Student Universe: studentuniverse.org

School Websites

- UMKC Study Abroad: www.umkc.edu/study-abroad
- UMKC Study Abroad Scholarship Page: umkc-sa.terradotta.com